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Involving Students in Assessment of Student Development: A Training Modality

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Abstract

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Involving Students in Assessment of Student Development: A Training Modality

The present paper describes an effort by one counselor training program to modify its curriculum for the preparation of student personnel workers toward a student development orientation and to develop in students skills in three areas of competency advocated in the recent Tomorrow's Higher Education (THE) project of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA). The THE document specified practitioner competencies in the three areas of goal setting, assessment, and strategies for student development (ACPA, 1974).

The training program was designed to communicate to students an orientation toward student development that might be characterized as proactive vs. remedial, total community (milieu management) vs. office centered, coordinated vs. fragmented approaches toward all student development functions, and a greater emphasis on the psychological developmental status of college students. Such an effort appeared to be consonant with the recommendations of the THE project. Concern that proposed programs be well grounded in psychological developmental theory has been emphasized by Parker (1974).

Student activities in one course of a four-quarter sequence of course work in student development are described below. The course, CED 654 - College Student Development, has as its major objectives the development of comprehensive knowledge of: (a) psychological developmental status of late adolescents and young adults, (b) various approaches to studying (understanding) such individuals, (c) skills

in planning student development activities that will facilitate the development of college students, and (d) competencies in assessment of student development. Basic bibliographic material for the course consists of Chickering's Education and Identity (1969), King's Coping Mechanisms in Adolescents (1971), and Erikson's Childhood and Society (1950). Students are introduced to other such basic works such as that of Havighurst (1953), Heath (1970), Cross (1971), Katz and Associates (1969).

Two distinct models of student psychological development were presented to students. One was that of Chickering, based largely on the theories of Erikson. This model, seemingly the most widely held view of student development, was termed a "crisis" model because the position is taken that youth must pass through a period of turmoil and upheaval at that stage of development before emerging into young adulthood. Development according to this view is seen as discontinuous; discrete stages of development with certain tasks required at each stage are presupposed. This view is quite similar to those described by Parker (1974).

The second model presented was that of King (1971), based upon a reinterpretation of Erikson's theories. This model has been termed a "continuity" model. A primary defining characteristic of this model is the position that most youth do not experience a period of severe psychological stress or disorientation, but rather, usually move somewhat uneventfully from one stage of development to another in a manner that might be termed "transitional." Most students do not experience psychosis or severe neurosis during the college years, although some undoubtedly do (King, 1971, 1973, Meadows, 1975). Such a model seemed to the

authors to best fit what is being attempted in restating student personnel programs in such terms as those outlined above. It is interesting to note that most professional association statements, including the THE statement, derive their theoretical base largely from theorists such as Erikson, who might be considered representative of the crisis model. In actuality, the programmatic changes in student development programs recommended in most association statements more nearly reflect a transitional view of student development.

Curricular Activity

CED 654 class activities involved such traditional work as textual study, reading and reporting on journal articles, group projects and presentation of these to the class. However, one major assignment was an attempt to enable students to create a conceptual framework for understanding student psychological development, actual assessment of such development, and delineation of implications for student development programs from the activity. This paper describes in some detail this learner activity and its impact. First, after thorough study of Chickering, Erikson, and King, together with the Omnibus Personality Inventory (OPI), the major instrument used in many student development studies, students were each assigned two undergraduate students at the junior or senior level. Undergraduate students were enrolled in a departmental undergraduate course which was an introduction to helping relationships. They represented many departments of the university; one common thread was that they were preparing for careers in a helping profession.

Undergraduates were administered the OPI two times. First, they were instucted to respond to the OPI as they perceived themselves prior to entering college. On the second administration they responded as they

presently viewed themselves. A structured interview format based upon Chickering's Vectors of Development was constructed by the researcher and graduate students enrolled in the class.

Each graduate student interviewed the two undergraduate students assigned. If requested by the interviewee, OPI results were presented and interpreted. Interviews normally lasted approximately one and one half hours. Upon completion of the interview, graduate students then possessed information concerning the psychological development of students interviewed from three sources: the OPI (both as students perceived themselves prior to entering college and near the time of the interview), notes taken during the interview related to perceptions of the interviewees of their development along the seven Chickering vectors, and the students' subjective impressions gained from the interviews. Finally, students were asked to write a paper of two or three typewritten pages in which they presented their views of the overall psychological developmental status of the undergraduates interviewed. Also, they were requested to state whether they felt each student interviewed best represented the crisis model or the continuity model of development and their rationale for such conclusions. Interestingly, students interviewed represented both models; approximately 30% the crisis model and 70% the continuity model. Some students made brief reports (confidentiality of interviewees was maintained) of their study to illustrate in more realistic terms the two developmental models.

Summary and Conclusions

Although the major purpose of the interview was not to generate test data on student development, results of the two administrations of

the OPI warrant some attention. It may be noted from Figure 1 that students generally perceived considerable development (in a direction consonant with most student development research and subjective position statements on the subject) from the time of entry to their junior or senior year. Of the thirteen scales of the OPI, significant growth was perceived by students on twelve. Results of a t test for repeated measures are presented in Table 1. Difference at the .05 level was considered significant.

Insert Figure 1 and Table 1 about here

Typical graduate student response to the activity was uniformly positive. Several made such comments as, "For the first time I think I really understand what is meant by student development." Such statements were made a second time on final student evaluations of the course.

It was felt that the activity achieved the primary objective of providing graduate students in college student development experience in the direct assessment of student growth and development. Also, the activity provided experience in interviewing students, experiential exposure to the concept of student psychological development which should provide a better skills base for planning and participating in future student development programs as a professional, and active participation in research pertaining to student development.

Undergraduate students also gained from the experience. Although they were not planning careers in student development, they were near entry into related helping professions. The interviews provided them an opportunity for self-exploration, experience in participating in an interview, and an opportunity to observe a more experienced role model in the helping profession.

It should be noted that the curricular experience described above was not intended to involve students in highly scientific research. Rather, they were involved in an experiential, activity-oriented research activity. The fact that the cohort tested represented different school years and that no control group was used seriously limits any conclusions from the OPI data. Also, it may be noted that the administration of the OPI was not a standardized one. Even so, the authors believe the curricular experience described did much to convey to prospective student development specialists a more substantial understanding of the concept of student psychological development. Also, there was general confirmation of a view of student development, the continuity model, which portrays the undergraduate student in more positive ways. Thus, trainees may take with them to their professional work more developmental expectations for those students with whom they will come in contact.

It is further believed that student development educators should search for the most effective training modalities possible. Certainly they should be expected to contribute substantially to reformulations of the roles of student development workers, an activity now limited largely to professional association statements. Parker's (1974) recent work provides an excellent model of such student development educator involvement. Activities such as those described above are potential ways of extending and making more relevant preparation programs.

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Table 1

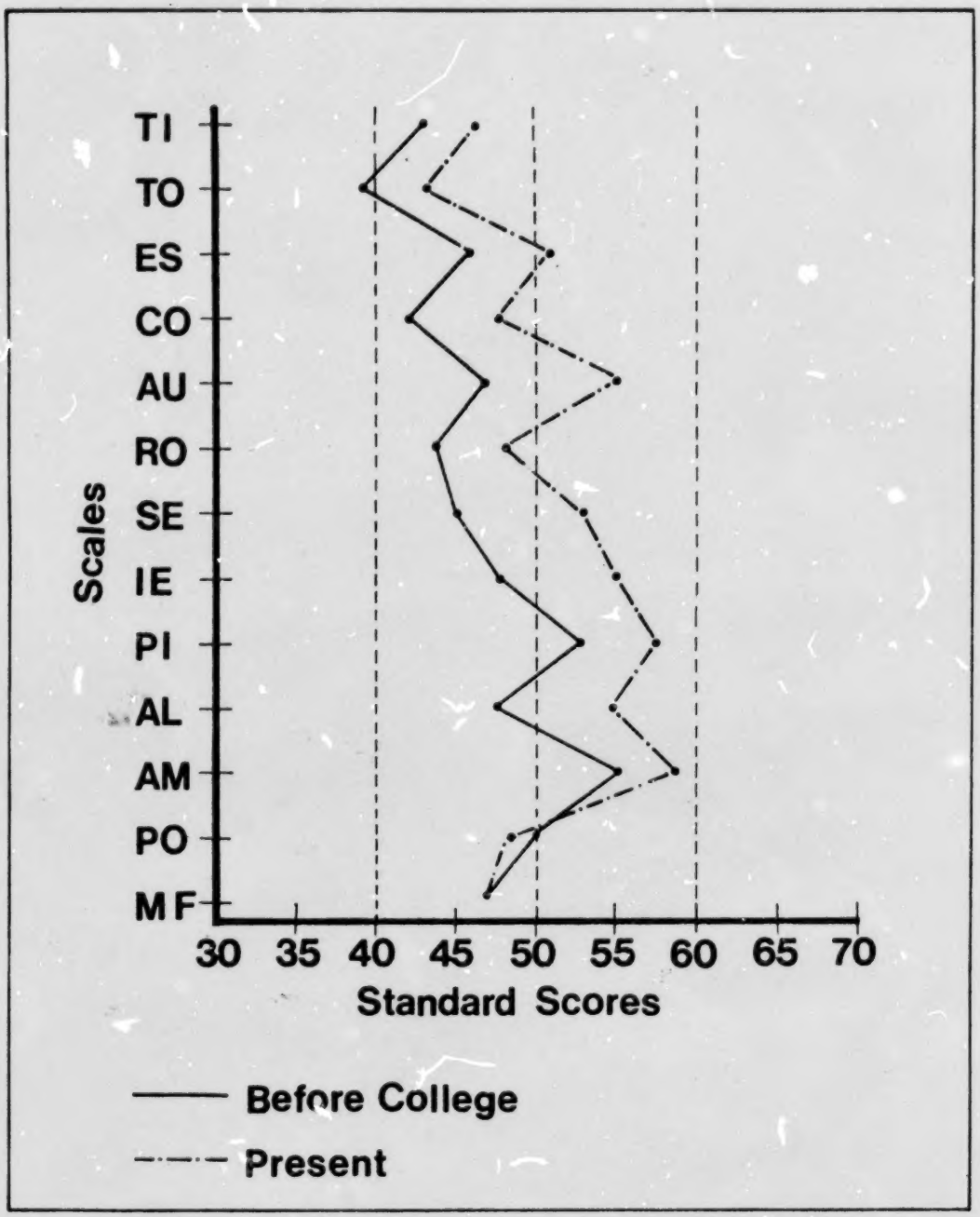
Means and t Values for Omnibus Personality Inventory Prior to College Entry and at Present for a Selected Group of University Juniors and Seniors [1]

		Mean, Group I (Now)	Mean, Group II (Then)	t
1.	Thinking Introversion (TI)	23.76	19.96	5.06
2.	Theoretical Orientation (TO)	16.08	14.12	3.32
3.	Estheticism (ES)	12.64	11.08	2.73
4.	Complexity (CO)	14.68	12.88	3.05
5.	Autonomy (AU)	27.50	24.36	3.34
6.	Religious Orientation (RO)	10.60	8.88	2.11
7.	Social Extroversion (SE)	24.80	21.40	2.53
8.	Impulse Expression (IE)	28.32	25.32	5.76
9.	Personal Integration (PI)	37.59	33.96	3.63
10.	Anxiety Level (AL)	13.52	11.80	2.81
11.	Altruism (AM)	24.76	23.16	2.53
12.	Practical Outlook (PO)	13.12	14.64	-2.56
13.	Masculinity-Femininity(M-F)	24.24	23.88	.40

[1] Note: t value of 2.064 required for significant difference of .05. All t values reported, with the exception of Masculinity-Femininity, are significant at .05 level or beyond.

Figure Caption

Figure 1: Standard scores for Omnibus Personality Inventory Prior to Entry and at Present for a Selected Group of University Juniors and Seniors.


TI
TO
ES
CO
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SE
IE
PI
AL
AM
PO
MF
Scales
30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70
Standard Scores
Before College
Present